

Frameshop's Progressive Staffer

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**Net Neutrality And The
'Dumb Pipe' Blog Ad**
Page 2

**Getting Fired Up: How The
GOP Will Try To Steal The 4th**
Page 2

**Feelin' Hot, Hot, Hot: Al Gore
Frames The Big Debate**
Page 2

**Frameshop: War Or Waste?
2 Iraq Frames**
Page 3

**FAQ: Why Is Frameshop
'Open'?**
Page 4

Wasting Time While Soldiers Die: The 'Cut and Run' Stunt

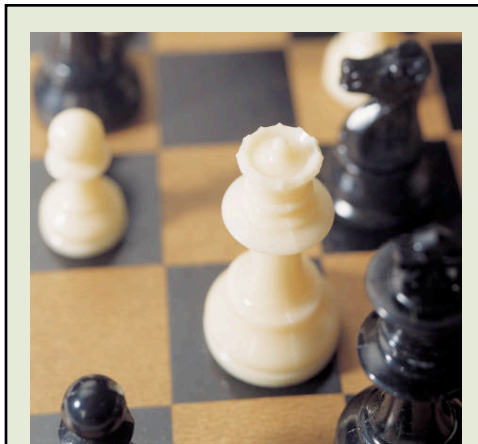
Bush Launches PR Gimmick To Stop Iraq Debate, Dems Should Push A Unified Frame

To stop Americans from debating Iraq, the White House has launched a PR campaign at the public using the phrase 'cut and run.' Unfortunately, this 'swiftboat' style tactic has tricked many in the established media, where 'cut and run' is being repeated ad nauseam. To lead this debate and get the media focused on the real issue again, Democrats could use this phrase:

wasting time while soldiers die

Why this phrase? Because it frames Iraq as a 'waste' rather than a 'war'--thereby unifying many ideas already put forth by outspoken Democrats in Congress and in the Senate.

At present, Democrats are speaking clearly and passionately, but are not controlling the frame. The result is a stalemate in the debate.



CHESS BOARD: While Republicans see National Security as 100% brute force in Iraq, Democrats see a chess board with dangers on many sides--only a smart strategy wins.

Dems Can Have Many Messages, But Must Stay In One Frame

The Republican attack is strong because it sets one frame--'war'--for the Iraq debate and sticks with it. When all Republicans reinforce the 'war' frame, the result is that critics of the Republicans are attacked as traitors to the 'war.' It is a good tactic.

Democrats, by contrast, have voiced powerful messages, but are not yet unified in one frame. Dem responses are varied and susceptible to being overrun by the Republican 'war' frame. In the face of the 'war' frame, for example, some Democrats also frame Iraq in Republican terms as a 'war,' while others frame it in Progressive terms as a 'waste.'

A unified frame does not mean that all Democrats must repeat the same slogan. But they must stick to one broad logic. To protect the public's right to debate foreign policy, all Democrats should frame debate in Progress-

sive terms by speaking of Iraq as a 'waste' (e.g., time, lives, resources) that undermines national security, rather than a 'war' that protects.

What Dems Can Say To Invoke The 'Waste' Frame In Media And Debate

Progressives define "national security" as **protection** against **many threats, not just one**. The danger we face as a nation is to lose sight of the big picture because we get **bogged down** in one place.

In this worldview, Iraq has been a waste of resources, lives and time in the fight against Al Qaeda. When Progressives speak on national security, we speak of 'protecting' America like winning a game of chess. We have **enemies all over the board**. If we focus too much on one square, we will lose.

The 'waste' frame defines the problem with Iraq not relative to beating the insurgency, but relative to the **other dangers** we ignore at our peril while obsessing over one small part of the picture.

Ultimately, rather than worrying about the one key phrase or slogan that will bring down the Republicans in the Iraq debate, Democrats would be better served if they pushed a unified frame.

Key Phrases Used In This Article:

- **wasting time while soldiers die**
- **many threats, not just one**
- **bogged down**
- **enemies all over the board**
- **other dangers**

###



Net Neutrality and the 'Dumb Pipe' Blog Ad

Last week, Progressive blog readers everywhere woke up to find a new ad asking "What is the future of the Internet?" staring at them in classic, hipster blog style. Since there is an active Save The Net campaign underway by Progressive blogs, most readers just assumed that the new ad was a contribution to this ongoing effort, and clicked away.

To their horror, 'What is the future of the Internet?' is actually a viral ad campaign by 'the other side' in this issue. It is an ad advocating against a free and open Internet, and in favor of the effort to essentially give the Internet over to big media corporations--not unlike the choice to give broadcast media rights away to big corporations.

The logic familiar radical conservative thought: Anything the 'free market' takes care of is good, advanced, lower priced, better for everyone. Anything the 'government' takes care of is bad, retrograde, expensive, bad for you.

The net neutrality debate is more of the same.

If laws are passed that essentially give the Internet to large media holdings corporations, the result will not be toxic waste in the lakes our children frequent or crashing airplanes. The result will be a high speed Internet network where content is regulated not by The Constitution of the United States, but by the corporate boards concerned more with profit than freedom of expression.

###



Getting Fired Up: How the GOP Will Try To Frame July Fourth

While Americans head out to enjoy a July Fourth barbecue or day at the beach, Republicans are getting ready to frame the debate for election 2006.

Here is what we can expect to flood the media from the Republican PR machine trying to improve its chances while Americans toast marshmallows:

- "Cut And Run" (Iraq)
- "Border Fence" (Immigration)
- "Godless Liberals" (Religion)

These are all familiar Republican hobby-horses, but over the big holiday weekend, they will be tested as 2006 campaign themes.

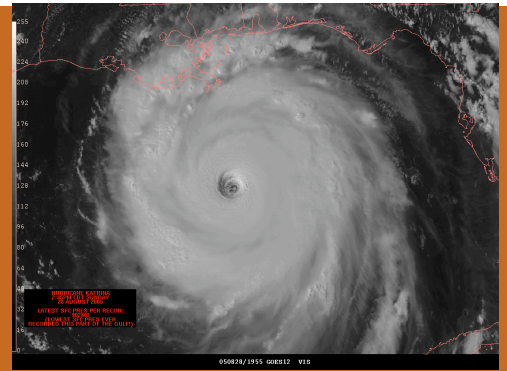
To avoid being framed, Democrats can lead the debate by talking about core issues that concern America:

- "Service and Sacrifice" (Iraq)
- "Prepared At Home" (Hurricanes)
- "New Energy Tech" (Environment)

While the Republicans try to scare voters into thoughts of imminent attack on U.S. soil if we rethink the Iraq policy,, Democrats can frame the weekend debate on forward thinking, positive Progressive values: service, planning, and environment.

After al, the big issue July Fourth weekend will be prices at the local gasoline pump.

###



Feelin' Hot, Hot, Hot: Gore Frames The Big Debate

Al Gore's movie about global warming, *An Inconvenient Truth*, has done far more than focus the country's attention on the environment. Gore has framed the debate in terms of media-driven Progressive politics.

Suddenly, Gore has turned the American cineplex into the central front in the American political debate. Unlike previous political films that critique President Bush, Gore's film opens the door to the discussion of global warming as the backdrop for hurricane season, summer heat waves, electricity prices, gas prices--and a host of other issues.

Gore's broad logic is that Progressives plan for the future, while Republicans waste resources. And the results can be disastrous.

Gore has also paired powerful images with previously wonkish topics--defining a core campaign issue with a visual vocabulary. Crashing glaciers and satellite photos of hurricanes are now iconic images with political meaning--thanks to Gore's film.

And the success of the film builds on the momentum of Gore's *Current TV* project, an experiment in popular television rich with Progressive values.

For a man lambasted as long-winded, Gore has become a pioneer in redefining the arena of politics in the past five years. As a result, Fall 2006 will likely be the first election where Global Warming is a hot button issue.

###

Frameshop: War or Waste? 2 Iraq Frames

If the Frame is 'War,' Then Pullout Means 'Defeat'

Republicans are on the warpath again, returning to their strategy of accusing Democrats of treason on Iraq.

In a national debate of this magnitude, the party that comes out on top will be the party that controls the frame because the frame--not the details--dictates the terms of the discussion.

Two Frames Define Iraq Debate

The debate on Iraq is unfolding at two levels: message and frame.

At the level of 'message,' the debate consists of Republicans calling Democrats cowards and of treason and betrayal and defeatism.

Also at the level of 'message,' Democrats are talking of 'time tables for withdrawal and asking the Iraqi's to take 'responsibility for themselves' and so forth.

But there is a second level in the debate that is much, much broader. Rather than taking the form of the actual words people are saying, this second level--the level of the 'frame'--is unspoken.

We do not hear or see the frame in everyday conversation or debate, because the frame is an unspoken set of ideas. The frame emerges only when we look for the assumptions behind the messages. For example, if a Republican says that Democrats want to 'cut and run,' I might ask, "Cut and run from what? What is Iraq?"

The answer to that question is different for Republicans and Democrats--and will give us the first glimpse of the two very different set

of assumptions, different broad narratives, different frames guiding the debate.

One Question, Two Frames

When asked "What is Iraq?" **Republicans** invoke the 'war' frame:

- **Iraq is a war (on terror).**
- **On 9/11, Al Qaeda attacked America.**
- **On 9/11 Iraq was full of terrorists.**
- **If we leave Iraq, we lose the war.**
- **We must stay to protect America.**

Democrats, by contrast, when asked the same question, "What is Iraq?" invoke the 'waste' frame:

- **Iraq is a waste (lives, resources).**
- **On 9/11, Al Qaeda attacked America.**
- **On 9/11, Al Qaeda was not in Iraq.**
- **If we stay in Iraq, we lose.**
- **We must leave to protect America.**

The two frames are very clear and very distinct. The problem is: Republicans are all invoking the 'war' frame, while Democrats are invoking both frames on and off. Republicans are speaking with one frame, while the Democrats are speaking with two frames.

The Logic Of The 'War' Frame: Stay And Fight, Win Or Lose

Once Republicans push the 'war' frame on Iraq, then any critique of the policy can be defined as a threat--treason and cowardice.

In the 'war' frame, however, we are stuck in a very narrow range of options. 'Winning' in the 'war' frame can really only mean one thing: surrender or destruction of the enemy.

When U.S. troops entered Baghdad, and the statue of Saddam Hussein was turned down--that was an image of 'surrender of the enemy.' And there was another declaration of victory when Hussein's sons were killed, and another when Hussein himself was caught.

Since that moment, however, the 'war' frame has been in crisis. The current enemy in Iraq

does not fit into the categories that the 'war' frame provides. The actual situation on the ground in Iraq is making it very hard to keep the 'war' frame in place.

Hence, the 'war' frame is good at rallying the public to destroy an enemy, but bad at pivoting once that enemy changes.

The Logic Of The 'Waste' Frame: Stay and Waste, Get Back To Work

'Waste' is how Democrats frame Iraq.

Right after 9/11, the United States hit back at the country with the most Al Qaeda ties: Afghanistan. But then the Bush administration wasted resources, lives and time by invading Iraq--a country not listed on the State Department's own map showing Al Qaeda activity.

In the 'waste' frame, Iraq is not a war. It is a dangerous, deadly, costly distraction.

The power in this frame is that provides a clear timeline and map of what happened and how the situation in Iraq has made America less safe.

In the 'waste' frame, if we do not retrench and return to the fight against Al Qaeda, then we are in real trouble.

In the 'waste' frame, anyone who does not see the logic of re-working the Iraq policy so that it refocuses on the real threat to America, is in fact complicit with those who drove the policy off the road in the first place.

Hence, the 'waste' frame is good at defining security, but bad at driving passions.

Sticking To One Frame

As discussed on the first page of this issue of *Frameshop's Progressive Staffer*, 'wasting time' and 'getting back to work' can be excellent ways for Dems to hold the frame. But seeing the two frames is the first step.

Once Democrats see the power of their frame, the 'cut and run' accusation will be less effective--an important step towards strengthening and securing America.

###



Since Dr. Feldman signed every Frameshop essay 'Frameshop is open,' that tag line became the now familiar, albeit unlikely, web address for the Frameshop site.

###

Question: *Who is Jeffrey Feldman?*

Answer: A Cultural Anthropologist who writes on the 'big picture' ideas that inform and control political debate, Jeffrey Feldman lives and works in New York City.

His articles are syndicated on Altnet.org, BuzzFlash.com, and many progressive blogs. His comments about the key framing issues of the week are a regular feature on Air America Radio.

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FAQ: Why is Frameshop 'Open'?

Question: *If the name of Jeffrey Feldman's blog is 'Frameshop,' then why is the web site address 'frameshopisopen.com'?*

Answer: Frameshop began as a diary series on The DailyKos.com in late 2004. When the popularity of the essays grew, Dr. Feldman initially searched for the availability of the domain 'Frameshop.com,' As luck would have it, that web address was already owned.

Editor's Note: In Praise of Staffers



Welcome to a new print version of *Frameshop* designed specifically for Democratic staffers. We hope this 'newsletter' format will give you--our most overworked and under-appreciated Democrats--insights from *Frameshop* in a format that fits easily and quickly into your busy work day.

Whether you are at the Capital or on the campaign trail, you rarely have time to check

the *Frameshop* web site or participate in an on-line discussion. But we still want to keep you in the conversation, because you are among our most important Progressive leaders.

Frameshop's Progressive Staffer puts key *Frameshop* insights and ideas in your hands in seconds. Print it out, photocopy it, pass it along in staff meetings, keep a copy on the bus or plane, leave a stack behind for volunteers, put a copy in your briefcase.

Frameshop's Progressive Staffer is 'boiled down' to be easy, and interesting, for you and your candidate or elected official to read. Despite the condensed version, each article is still rich with valuable perspective on current politics and communication. Read it out of interest, and because you want to keep on top what is happening from the ground up.

Newsletters may seem old-fashioned, but the world cannot run on Blackberry and blogs alone.

So, we hope this new format is both timely and valuable--for your staffing memos, briefing binders, phone calls and prep sessions. Keep up the good work. And we will keep *Frameshop* open.

--JF

Back Issues

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